

Leonard Reggie STEPHENS

Born Q1, 1897 Dawlish
Private, 202040

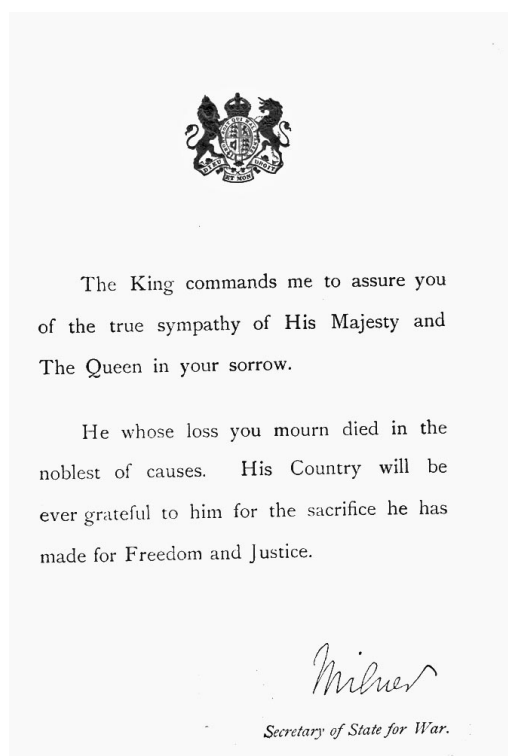
Died 26 October 1917, aged 20
15th Battn, Royal Warwickshire Regt

Leonard Reggie Stephens was the second son of William Stephens (1863-1909) and Emily Gunningham (1860-1936). William was a gardener and had been born at Elworthy, Somerset and he married Emily (born in Ash Priors, Somerset) in Q1, 1891 in the Newton Abbot district. In 1901 they were living at a cottage (near Rock Cottage) Cockwood with William Edwin Stephens (1893-1982) aged 7 and **Leonard Reggie Stephens** aged 4.

William Stephens died on 28th September 1909 at the young age of 46 and Emily was working as a Housekeeper to Edward Wollacott at Faleide, Southbrook, Starcross in 1911, with her two sons. Edwin was 16 and working as a Grocer's apprentice.

Later, Emily moved to 11 Parson Street, Teignmouth according to the CWGC site record and she died on the 21 January 1936 at 6 Higher Brook Street, Teignmouth. She left her effects to her son William Edwin Stephens, a labourer.

Both boys served in the same regiment, the 15th Battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment. The daughter of William Edwin Stephens has written that her father was wounded in the war while her uncle was killed in action. There are no surviving Service Records but it is shown that **Leonard** enlisted at Newton Abbot and he was 'killed in action'. His personal items were returned to his mother.



15th (Service) Battalion (2nd Birmingham) Royal Warwickshire Regiment

15th (2nd Birmingham Pals) Battalion, Royal Warwickshire Regiment was raised in Birmingham in September 1914 by the Lord Mayor and a local committee. After training they joined 95th Brigade, 32nd Division on the 26 June 1915. They proceeded to France, landing at Boulogne on the 21st of November 1915. On the 28 December 1915 they transferred to 14th Brigade, 5th

Division, one of many units were exchanged to stiffen the inexperienced 32nd Division with regular army troops. On the 14th of January 1916 they transferred to 13th Brigade still with 5th Division. In March 1916 5th Division took over a section of front line between St Laurent Blangy and the southern edge of Vimy Ridge, near Arras. They moved south in July to reinforce The Somme and were in action at, High Wood, The Battle of Guillemont, The Battle of Flers-Courcelette, The Battle of Morval and The Battle of Le Transloy. In October they moved to Festubert and remained there until March 1917 when they moved in preparation for the Battles of Arras. On 7 September 1917 the 5th Division moved out of the line for a period of rest before, being sent to Flanders where they were in action during the Third Battle of Ypres.

The Third Battle of Passchendaele commenced on 26 October 1917, the date of Leonard's death.

5th Division was sent to Italy and took up positions in the line along the River Piave in late January 1918. This was a strategic and political move agreed by the British Government at the request of the Allied Supreme War Council, as an effort to stiffen Italian resistance to enemy attack after a recent disaster at Caporetto. Many diaries at this time, by men who had witnessed slaughter in the floods of Passchendaele, talk of the move and Italy as being "like another world".

They were recalled to France to assist with the German Advance in late March 1918 and were in action during the Battles of the Lys. On the 14th of August 1918 the 5th Division was withdrawn for two weeks rest. They then moved to The Somme where they were more or less in continuous action over the old battlegrounds until October and saw action in the Battles of the Hindenburg Line and the Final Advance in Picardy. On the 6th of October 1918 the 2nd Birmingham Pals were disbanded with troops transferring to the 1st and 3rd Birmingham Pals Battalions.

Leonard Reggie Stephens is commemorated on the War Memorial in Cofton Churchyard. He and his brother went to school in Starcross. He is not listed on the Dawlish Boys' School Roll of Honour, nor on the Devon Roll of Honour for Dawlish.

Commonwealth War Graves entry:

Private Service No: 202040 Date of Death: 26/10/1917 Age: 21

Royal Warwickshire Regiment, 15th Bn.

Grave Reference: LXVI. G. 3. Tyne Cot Cemetery, Zonnebeke, West Flanders

Additional Information:

Son of William and Emily Stephens, of 11, Parson St., Teignmouth, Devon. Native of Cofton, Starcross, Devon.

Last known address: Faleide, Starcross

Next of kin: Emily Stephens (mother) of 11 Parson Street, Teignmouth.

References:

Private letters

CWGC website entry

Cofton churchyard memorial

refs vis subscription website, Ancestry:

Census records

Stephens family tree (ancestry)

UK, Army Registers of Soldiers' Effects

UK, Soldiers Died in the Great War